

# CONSTITUENT QUESTION

## House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Anita Dow MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Bridget Archer MP  
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

### QUESTION:

My question is from my constituent on King Island, who states that the upcoming reduction in flight services to King Island from 1 May, including the removal of the Monday afternoon service to Burnie, will have a direct and detrimental impact on patients requiring time-sensitive healthcare. Patients who require pathology on a Monday prior to a treatment will now be forced to travel earlier, wait on the mainland for results and potentially face treatment delays or cancellations depending on those results as a consequence of this reduction in air services to the island. What actions is the government taking to ensure access to off-island health services and to allay the concerns of chemotherapy patients on the island?

### ANSWER:

The Tasmanian Government recognises the challenges that changes to air services can create for residents of our island communities, particularly for those accessing essential off-island health services.

I am advised that the Department of Health has contractual arrangements with airlines who go to the Bass Strait islands, to ensure people can travel off-island to access treatment that is time-sensitive, such as chemotherapy.

I am further advised that there are currently no issues with those arrangements at this time, but if flight availability does become an issue in getting people to their critical appointments, aeromedical services can also be utilised through the Department's partnership with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and through the enhanced Rotary Wing aeromedical contract to ensure people can access their appointments.

Additionally, the Patient Travel Assistance Scheme continues to support eligible patients to travel to required eligible medical services when these are not available locally. Under current arrangements, subsidies for charter flights can be approved through an exceptional ruling where commercial services are unavailable or unsuitable due to clinical need or service constraints.

In relation to the broader issue of commercial flight availability, we do recognise the importance of these flights to Island residents, and the Minister for Transport is closely monitoring this issue. I am advised that Sharp Airlines has introduced a direct Launceston-King Island flight two days per week. This will reduce travel time for passengers from Launceston and increase capacity by allowing the airline to operate a separate King Island-Burnie leg on those days. This means that, while there has been a change in the operating schedule, there will be no change to the number of weekly flights between King Island and Burnie.

Further, in response to concerns raised by Sharp Airlines over the viability of service delivery to the islands in 2025, the Tasmanian Government has stepped in to provide funding while Sharp Airlines has implemented changes to reduce the cost of operating the service and support their own long-term sustainability.

We are seeking Federal Government recognition of the critical role of regional aviation as part of the national transport network and an agreement of a funding model that shares the cost of supporting these critical services and their ongoing viability. While this work is ongoing, we will continue to engage with aviation providers and community stakeholders to ensure essential access to healthcare for our island residents.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bridget Archer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underlining the name.

Hon Bridget Archer MP  
**Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Date: 4 May 2026